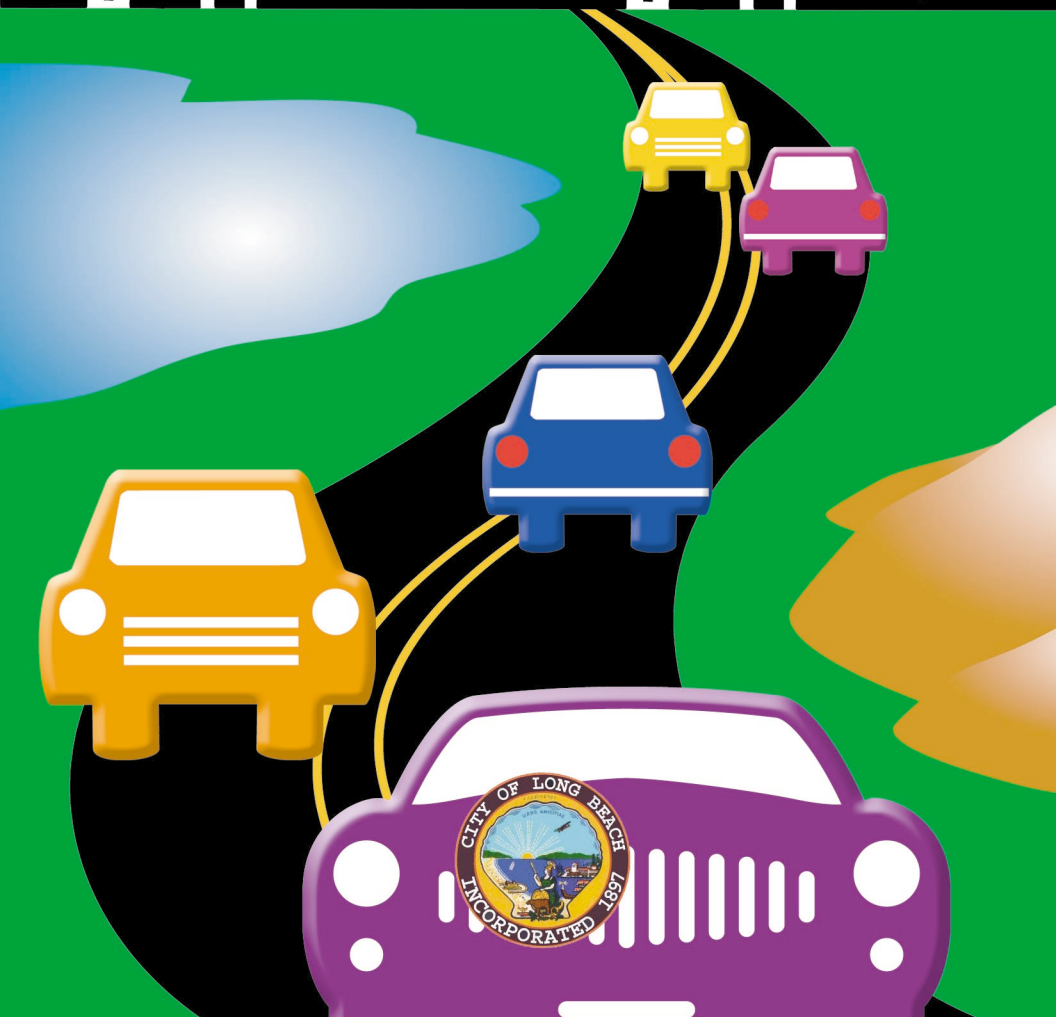


*You Can't Just  
Cross Your Fingers*

# **A Parent's Guide**

To Teen Safety- Drinking, Driving & Seat Belts



## YOU CAN'T JUST CROSS YOUR FINGERS

---



There are so many roads through adolescence! Don't just cross your fingers and hope that your child takes the safest way. Our youth today are bombarded with so many messages from the media, movies, music, and friends that it is hard to tell what messages are good for them. You can and must make a difference by becoming a part of the blitz of information. You can't control what they experience but if you adopt a consulting role in their lives and set a good example with clear and consistent rules you can assure a much better experience from adolescence to adulthood.



In this guide, we will provide you with some knowledge and suggestions on becoming aware of the messages you send to your adolescence and how to empower them to make better choices. Ignorance may be bliss, but when it comes to drug and alcohol use by young adults, it may be deadly. This guide will offer some effective communication tools to help you discuss sensitive subjects, like choices and responsibility with the young adults in your family. The bottom line here is that the more trust, openness, and honesty in your relationship, the less likely your family will suffer the preventable pain and anguish of an alcohol/drug related death, injury or a criminal record; which has become too common in the United States today.



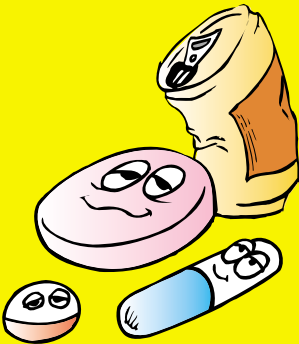
## DO YOUR ACTIONS SUPPORT YOUR WORDS?

---



How would you feel if you were your teen now? What message are you sending to your teen about drugs? They will listen to what you say about alcohol and other drugs and then look at your behavior. Do your words and your actions support each other?

Your children look to you for guidance, so try to remain clear and consistent about the messages you are sending to your teens about the dangers of early and high-risk alcohol use. Remember that alcohol impacts teens differently than adults.



# A SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR PARENTS

Certain attitudes and behaviors may make alcohol more appealing to your teenager. The following brief self-assessment worksheet could help you see what type of messages you are sending to your teen about alcohol. From [www.maineparents.net](http://www.maineparents.net)

## Self-Assessment Worksheet

Often	Sometimes	Never	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you make lighthearted or joking comments about other people's heavy drinking? (i.e. "He's got a hollow leg." or "She holds her liquor well!")
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you tell funny or glorified stories about you or friends' drinking antics when you were younger?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you ask your child to get a drink from the fridge?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you wear t-shirts, baseball caps, etc. that advertise or promote drinking and/or specific brands of alcohol?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	When watching television with your child, do you laugh at scenes where alcohol is being abused?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you see (and communicate this view to your children) drinking as a rite of passage for teenagers that can't be avoided?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you host social gatherings at your home where alcoholic beverages are the only drinks served and/or where drinking is the central focus of the gathering?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you assume that alcohol is a necessary part of any celebration or social gathering?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you model using alcohol as a stress reduction tool? (i.e. comments like "I've had a long day, I need a drink!")
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you offer alcohol to your teens as a "special treat" for celebrations, family gatherings, etc?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do host parties at your house where alcohol is served or available to teens?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does your child observe you drinking more than 2 or 3 drinks on any one occasion?

If answered "often" or "sometimes" two or more times, you might be unintentionally sending mixed messages to your child, and could be implying that it is OK for him or her to drink or experiment with alcohol.

## WHY SHOULD YOU TALK ABOUT ALCOHOL?

---

The majority of young adults in trouble due to alcohol and other drugs say that their parents never spoke with them about the dangers and risks. Don't wait for a problem to occur. Don't wait for friends, the police, or the court system to teach your kids about alcohol or other drugs. Being a parent is the most important thing we will ever do with our lives. As an involved, informed, kind but firm parent, you can support and encourage safe behavior.

Delaying the age which young people take their first drink lowers their risk of becoming problem drinkers. That's a huge reason to talk to the teenagers in your life about alcohol, but it's not the only one.

### Other important reasons are:

- Underage drinking is illegal.
- Alcohol is implicated in more than a third of driver fatalities of adolescents ages 15-20 and in about two-fifths of drownings.
- Drinking interferes with good judgement, leading young people into risky behavior and making them vulnerable to sexual coercion.
- Alcohol has harmful effects on developing brains and bodies.
- Teenagers who use alcohol and tobacco are at risk for using other drugs.
- Teenagers who drink are more likely to develop behavioral problems including stealing, fighting, and skipping school.

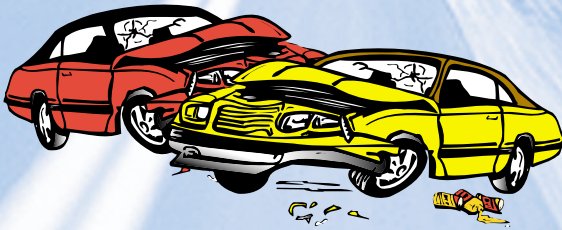


# TEENS, ALCOHOL & DRIVING

## Car crashes are the leading cause of death for teens

(National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2002)

Combining an inexperienced driver with alcohol or other drugs is especially deadly; according to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's traffic safety statistics, twenty-nine percent of 15-20 year olds who were killed in motor vehicle crashes during 2002 had been drinking. Furthermore, sixty-nine percent of young drivers (15-20 year old) of passenger vehicles involved in fatal crashes who had been drinking were unrestrained.



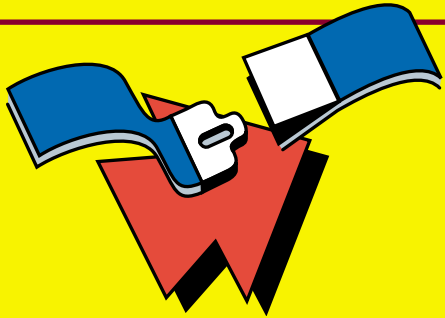
## Teens are high-risk drivers

[www.drivehomesafe.com](http://www.drivehomesafe.com)

- This age group makes up 7% of the licensed drivers, but suffers 14% of fatalities and 20% of all reported crashes.
- Teenagers are involved in far more motor vehicle collisions than any other age group, thus they are much more likely to be killed or injured in a collision.
- When teen drivers are involved in a collision they are usually at fault.
- The 16-year-old population alone will increase from 3.5 million to over 4 million by 2010.
- Lack of driving experience and a general tendency towards high-risk behavior (i.e. speeding and not using seat belts) are primary causes of teen injuries and fatalities.

## BUCKLE-UP

---



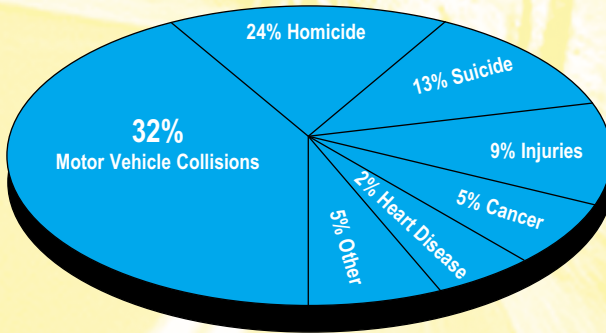
In California nearly half of the 51015-20 year olds killed in vehicles in 2001 were not wearing their seat belts. (SWITRS, 2002)

Set the safe example early!If you don't use your seat belt, your kids won't either. The National Safety Council Air Bag & seat Belt Safety Campaign states "driver restraint use is the strongest predictor of child restraint use.

"According to data from the California Office of Traffic Safety, when a driver is buckled, restraint use for children is 94 percent. When a driver is unbuckled restraint use for children is 30 percent.



**Motor vehicle collisions are the number one killer of teens**



**Deaths of all 15-20 year olds**

Teach by example; always wear your seat belt. Make it a condition that your teen either buckles up, or ride the bus. If they are cited for a seat belt or any other violation, make sure they pay the consequences by paying the fines, higher insurance rates, and going to traffic school is an option. Remember, experience equals knowledge and if you shield young adults from experience, they are not able to learn the lesson.

## Teens and Driving Under the Influence (DUI)

Driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs is a crime. That criminal charge will stay on your child's record forever. It will affect their insurance rates, college applications and can influence future job choices. It may even make them ineligible for certain licensed professions such as doctor, lawyer, policeman, fireman, teacher, paramedic or nurse.

The following information on "What you need to know if you are under 21" and "What Parents and adults need to know" comes from San Diego County Policy Panel on Youth Access to Alcohol ([www.alcoholpolicypanel.org](http://www.alcoholpolicypanel.org))

### If you're under 21 – What you need to know

#### 1. California's Zero Tolerance Law states the following:

- It is illegal for an underage youth to drive with a blood alcohol content (BAC) above 0.01%. For most to reach a BAC of 0.01% that means drinking either one 12-ounce beer, one 4-ounce glass of wine, or one drink with 1.25 ounces of 80 proof distilled spirits.
- If a youth is suspected of drinking by a police officer, the officer may require a Preliminary Alcohol Screening Test or other chemical tests.
- A youth that refuses to submit or fails to take the test, or is found to have a BAC equal to or above 0.01%, can have their driver's license suspended for up to 3 years.

#### 2. Causing Injury

Any person driving under the influence causing injury to another may be imprisoned for up to 1 year for each injured person and receive a fine up to \$1,000 in addition to a suspension of driving privilege for 1 year.

#### 3. Purchase or Consume

Any underage individual who purchases, attempts to purchase or consumes an alcoholic beverage will receive a minimum \$250 fine and/or 24 to 32 hours of community service in addition to having driving privilege suspended or delayed for 1 year.



#### **4. Transporting or Possessing Alcohol in a Vehicle**

Any driver or passenger under 21 possessing or transporting alcohol in a vehicle may receive a fine up to \$1,000 or imprisonment for not more than 6 months or both and suspended or delayed driving privilege for 1 year in addition to having his/her vehicle impounded.

#### **5. False Identification**

Possession of suspended, altered, fictitious, etc. CA license or ID Card permitting use of, showing another's as your own, failing to surrender suspended/revoked license or unauthorized alteration will result in a fine up to \$1,000 or up to 6 months in county jail or both.

#### **6. Possession of Alcohol in Public**

any underage individual who possesses an alcoholic beverage in a public place or a place open to the public can receive a maximum \$1,000 fine and/or 6 months in county jail and will have his/her driving privilege suspended or delayed for 1 year.

#### **7. Minor on Premises**

Any minor on public premises of an over 21 alcohol establishment will receive a fine up to \$1,000 and/or 6 months in county jail and will have his/her driving privilege suspended or delayed for 1 year.

## What Parents and Adults need to know:

- Any person who sells, gives or furnishes an alcoholic beverage to a minor can receive a fine up to \$1,000 and up to 32 hours of community service.
- If a minor consumes alcohol and causes great bodily injury to themselves or any other person, the provider of the alcohol can receive up to a year in county jail and a fine of \$1,000.
- An alcohol retailer who sells alcohol to a minor faces heavy fines and the possibility of losing his or her license to sell alcohol.

### Warning Signals & Red Flags:

Normal teenage development will involve a bit of rebellion and withdrawal from family as your child matures. If you are actively involved in your son or daughter's life, one or two of these changes may not come as a shock or warrant any serious concern unless they are prolonged and extreme. Finding or smelling alcohol or other drugs or drug paraphernalia; rolling papers, pipes or pipe screens, spoons burnt on the bottom, small baggies, would warrant concern and a serious response from you, but so might a sudden intense combination of the following warning signs.

- Disregard or rejection of family rules and values
- Problems at school, poor attendance, low grades, and/or recent disciplinary action
- Change in friends, activities and attitude
- Decrease or extreme changes in energy
- Decrease or extreme change in physical or mental ability
- Lack of care toward appearance or former interests



# ALCOHOL POISONING & BINGE DRINKING

Because alcohol is a depressant, drinking too much too fast or binge drinking (5 drinks or more in quick succession) will slow the bodily functions and the drinker may lose consciousness and can die. Alcohol poisoning is more common with younger drinkers because of the style of drinking and trying to compete with peers. Putting this person to bed to sleep is a deadly mistake with heartbreaking consequences.



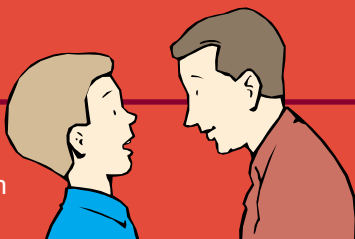
## Signs of Alcohol Poisoning include:

- Unconsciousness or semi-consciousness
- Slow respiration - eight or fewer breaths per minute, or lapses between breaths of more than eight seconds
- Cold, clammy, pale, or bluish skin
- A strong odor of alcohol on the breath or coming from the skin

## what to do in an Alcohol Poisoning emergency:

- Never leave someone who may have alcohol poisoning alone to “sleep it off”
- Call 911 immediately
- Gently turn the person on his or her side, using a pillow placed at the small of their back to keep him or her in that position. This will help prevent choking should the individual vomit
- Stay with the person until medical help arrives

## HOW WILL YOU TALK TO YOUR TEENAGER?



As you embrace their journey from adolescence to adulthood, your role as a parent will change as much as they do. The parenting that worked with your fifth grader may tend to repel and inspire rebellion in an adolescent. Mark Twain once said, “Good judgement comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgement.” While this period in your child’s life involves letting go so they can experience the world, you can open a dialogue about alcohol and other drugs so that their judgement will have your experience, values and feelings as a base.

Be honest, open and clear about your expectations and rules concerning drinking or other drug use. For example:

*“I don’t want to drink or use drugs because I love you and I don’t want you to hurt yourself. Why do you think kids use drugs? What do think I should do if you use drugs?”*

Give your son/daughter an opportunity to contribute to these rules and expectations so they feel listened to, taken seriously, and know they can come and talk to you about what is really going on. **ESTABLISH TRUTH BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR CHILD THIS WAY.** If they can rely on your advice when they need it, they will come back for more.

It is important to prepare them with the knowledge that no matter what happens you love them and want them healthy and safe. Promise to be there if there is a problem. For example, if they call you while under the influence of alcohol or drugs and/or cannot get home safely, let them feel they can trust you. This doesn’t mean that there will not be consequences to their actions, but it is more important for you to make sure they get home safe and alive!



These are some tips on creating an environment with open communication from **[www.wordscanwork.com](http://www.wordscanwork.com)**. Adopting these tips will enable you to talk about anything.

- Be sure to listen more than you talk
- Spend time together, it shows you care
- Share your family's values. "In our family we believe...Let me explain why"
- Talk with your children, not at them. Ask them their opinions: "What do you think?"
- Even when you disagree, show respect
- Be honest
- Words work best when your actions back them up
- Shaming children erodes self-esteem
- Critical looks shut down communication
- Affirm good choices. It builds self-confidence. Give them a chance to make choices: "What choice do you think is best for you right now?"
- Apologize for your mistakes: "I'm sorry I yelled at you. I want to explain why I was so upset"



## A RITE OF PASSAGE

---

With all of the increased risks of underage drinking, it is really worth turning your back on the issue?

With all of the information about deadly consequences of alcohol, why would you want to make it “ok” for them to drink in your home?

Underage drinking is illegal. Providing alcohol to a person under 12 is too. If they happen to leave in a car and kill or injure anyone, you will be charged with a crime as well. Please don't believe that as long as they drink at home they will be safe. This will only prevent one of the many consequences of underage drinking. Research indicates that the younger a person starts drinking, the more likely he or she will face a life-long addiction to alcohol. Alcohol is also associated with injuries, violent crimes such as assault, rape, and homicide, and binge drinking may result in alcohol poisoning. Why would you allow your child to risk these preventable occurrences? There is no “safe place” for teen to drink!

### Putting it all together to get them through Safe & Alive

Now that the message and life you lead are consistent with what you are telling your teenager, there is much more for you to do and it involves some real time effort.

#### Knowing what is going on with your teen

- Know the where, when, what and with whom
- Don't make it easy for them to experiment
- Make your teen check in with you when they return home, look for signs of drug and alcohol use in their speech, eyes and smell
- Have a clear NO USE policy; teens that know how their parents feel about drug use are less likely to use them.
- Have clear and enforceable consequences that you can live with
- Be able to share and discuss any experiences you have had with drugs honestly
- Emphasize the loss and diminishing effect drugs have on lives

As discussed in this guide, there are many things you can do as a parent to smooth the road. It is hard to “control” teenagers, but if you embrace your role as one of positive influence rather than “control” you may have a much happier attitude about being involved in your child's life this way.

No one said it would be easy; but with some practice, trust, and communication, you can do a lot more than just keep those fingers crossed. The responsibility may begin with you as the other parent but schools, businesses, churches, law enforcement and community agencies must unite to create an environment where alcohol and other drug use is neither accepted nor encouraged. If you need more help, find alternative resources: a parenting book at your local bookstore, a search on the web, a parenting class, or a few counseling sessions will empower you to be a better parent. Just remember, the first step is to be informed and communicate with the suffering and painful consequences that arise when adolescents engage in risky behavior such as the use of alcohol and other drugs.



## RESOURCES:

### THE GUIDANCE CENTER

Providing child and family mental health services since 1946

3711 Long Beach Blvd., Suite 600  
Long Beach, CA 90807 - 3322  
562-595-1159

*The Turning Point Program* is a comprehensive outpatient substance abuse program for youth between the ages of 12-18 who has used or is experiencing problems associated with alcohol or other drug use.

### Family Services of Long Beach

1041 Pine Avenue  
Long Beach, CA 90813  
562-436-9893

Alcohol, drug, and mental health services for youth and families ages 4 and up. One-on-one and group counseling. Children of Divorce sessions for children 5-18 with separate session for parents.

### NCADD-Positive Choices

3750 Long Beach Blvd.,  
Long Beach, CA 90807  
562-426-8262

Alcohol and drug treatment, education, and school-based programs for youth.

### ADOLESCENT TREATMENT PROJECT:

Outpatient for court, probation, schools, agency, parent, self-referred youth ages 13-18

### Scott Newman Center

"Neighborhoods in Action"  
3710 skypark Drive  
Torrance, CA 90505  
800-783-6396

### [www.scottnewmancenter.org](http://www.scottnewmancenter.org)

The Scott Newman Center is dedicated to the prevention of substance abuse through education. The Center continues to develop innovative, research-based drug prevention materials and projects that target families, schools and communities.

## ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

### Harbor area Central Office

3450 E. Spring St. Suite 109  
Long Beach, CA 90806

### [www.HACOOA.org](http://www.HACOOA.org)

This self help group offers emotional support and an effective model of abstinence for people recovering from alcohol dependence. There are more than 2 million AA members worldwide, and local chapters can be found throughout the United States.

### Al-Anon/Alateen

4936 Lankershim Blvd.,  
North Hollywood, CA 91601  
818-760-7122

### [www.alanonla.org](http://www.alanonla.org)

Support for men, women and children whose lives are affected by alcoholism, other than their own. Alateen is primarily for teenagers and may include pre-teens.

### Children of Alcoholics Foundation

164 W. 74th St.  
New York, N.Y. 10023  
212-595-5810 ext. 7760

### [www.coaf.org](http://www.coaf.org)

This organization was founded to help people who have an alcoholic parent, to educate the public and professionals about this group, and to disseminate research on the effects of family alcoholism on children. Provides a variety of educational material.

### Join Together

441 Stuart St., 7th Floor  
Boston, MA 02116  
617-437-1500

### [www.jointogether.org](http://www.jointogether.org)

A project of the Boston University School of Public Health, this organization helps community groups organize to prevent substance abuse and gun violence. It also sponsors the Web site, [www.alcoholscreening.org](http://www.alcoholscreening.org), a useful resource for people who are concerned about their drinking patterns.

**National Clearinghouse for Alcohol  
and Drug Information**

P.O. Box 2345  
Rockville, MD 20847-2345

**[www.health.org](http://www.health.org)**

This nonprofit clearinghouse offers a wide range of information about substance-abuse prevention, including publications, videos, research information, and circulation materials – many of which are provided free of charge.

**National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse  
(NIAAA)**

6000 Executive Blvd.  
Wilco Building  
Bethesda, MD 20892-7003  
301-443-3860

**[www.niaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaa.nih.gov)**

This government agency supports and conducts 'biomedical and behavioral research on the causes, consequences treatment, and prevention of alcoholism and alcohol-related problems. Provides fact sheets and pamphlets on these topics.

**The Partnership for a Drug Free America**

**[www.drugfreeamerica.org](http://www.drugfreeamerica.org)**

an educational website which helps kids and teens to reject substance abuse by influencing attitudes through persuasive information.

**SMART Recovery**

**(Self Management And Recovery Training)**

7537 Mentor Avenue, Suite 306  
Mentor, OH 44060-5400  
440-951-5357

**[www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org)**

A non-spiritual abstinence based free self help program to support individuals who have been chosen to abstain, or are considering abstinence from any type of addictive behaviors (substance or activities), by teaching how to change self-defeating thinking, emotions, and actions; and to work towards long-term satisfaction and quality of life. Online meetings.

**Women for Sobriety, Inc.**

P.O. Box 618  
Quakerstown, PA 18951-0618

**[www.womenforsobriety.org](http://www.womenforsobriety.org)**

an alternative to alcoholics anonymous dedicated to helping women overcome alcoholism and other addictions with online chat groups.

**Special Thanks to:**

- Lawrence Norman, Graf'iks etc. for the design and layout of this guide.
- Sergeant Hans Kohnlein, Long Beach Police Department
- Sergeant Michael, Long Beach Police Department



City of Long Beach  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Rehabilitation Division  
2525 Grand Ave., Long Beach, CA 90815  
562-570-4100

Funding for this project was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety